## SUPPLEMENT 2

## CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS PROGRAM

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**Introduction**

Personnel may experience a critical incident and traumatic stress during the line of duty.  A critical incident is any unexpected, traumatic event that affects and individual's feelings of personal safety, their ability to perform daily activities, and their ability to concentrate on their normal job duties. Simply put, a critical incident is a traumatic event (or perceived life-threatening event) that has sufficient power to overwhelm an individual's ability to cope. Critical incidents may also occur outside of work and still impact large numbers of employees.

**I.  Critical Incident Peer Support**

Benefits of early intervention by both professional and peer-support personnel who are specially trained and follow established protocols of stress management can promote positive recovery from traumatic stress. Experts believe that various techniques and processes used in Critical Incident Peer Support can help individuals improve their coping abilities and dramatically decrease the occurrence of Post -Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), lower the tension and mitigate the group's reaction to a traumatic event.

First developed for use with military combat veterans and then civilian first responders (police, fire, ambulance, emergency workers and disaster rescuers), it has now been adapted and used virtually everywhere there is a need to address a traumatic impact in people's lives.

Peer relationships are built around a mutual understanding, respect and trust.  Shared experiences are the foundation for peer support as they foster the initial trust and credibility necessary for developing relationships in which individuals are willing to open up and discuss their problems despite concerns about stigma.

Peer Supporters have received training and certification as Critical Incident Peer Supporters. They are trained to listen, assess and refer when necessary to trained Mental Health Professionals. Peer Supporters should never be used as a replacement for the professional care or used outside of the scope they have been trained for.

CI Peer Support is not psychotherapy or counseling. It is not treatment for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and it is not intended as a substitute for such. Neither is the CI Peer Support a critique nor an investigation of the traumatic event. It is also not a part of any problem-solving process for administrative problems.

**II.   Timeline**

Critical Incident support *is not an emergency* however assistance should be ordered as soon as possible. CI support intervention processes generally start no sooner 48-72 hours after an incident. CI support services can also be provided within a few weeks or longer depending on the incident. It is important to allow time for affected individuals to disengage operationally, and re-connect with family or friends. Once this occurs individuals are typically emotionally ready to benefit from peer support.

**III.  Who We Are**

Since chartered by the Great Basin Coordinating Group in 2001, the Great Basin Peer Support Group has been providing assistance to Fire and Aviation personnel when serious accidents, injuries or death have occurred in the line of duty.

Since its inception, fire-related personnel (including, dispatchers, engines, smokejumpers, hotshot, aviation, fire management and others) have attended the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation's Individual & Group crisis intervention classes. They have responded to a variety of fire and aviation line of duty traumatic incidents and provided valuable support. The Great Basin's Critical Incident Peer Support Group is committed to peers helping peers and is available upon request. When needed, the group has access to mental health professionals; who can provide another level of support.

The Great Basin does not maintain "CISM Teams." CI Peer Support Groups are assembled at the time of request through the appropriate Great Basin Coordination Center and comprise of Peer and Group Supporters with similar backgrounds and experience as those involved in a critical incident.

### IV.  What We Do

Great Basin Critical Incident Peer Support Groups provide the following:

- Situation assessment for managers to help determine the timing and type of support needed for each incident.

- A Peer Support Group to provide crisis management services with access to mental health care professionals who specialize in trauma.

- Request assistance from a Human Resource Specialist to provide information regarding local resources that provide follow up support.

- Support Incident Management Teams, militia and non-fire support personnel affected by an incident.

- Provide peers supporters who can travel to the fire line, spike camp and other remote locations.

### V.  Mobilization Responsibilities and Process

#### A.  Agency Administrator

##### 1.  Identification of the Event
The Agency Administrator is responsible for identifying a critical event as a critical incident. The Agency Administrator is the highest ranking agency line officer with direct responsibility for the personnel involved in the incident.

##### 2.  Request Critical Incident Peer Support
The Agency Administrator or designee is responsible for requesting Critical Incident Peer Support through the appropriate Great Basin Coordination Center (GACC).  A Critical Incident Peer Support Coordinator will be assigned who will work with the Agency Administrator and designated Peer Group Leader to decide the size and make-up of the group.

Generally, a Liaison will travel as soon as possible to the unit affected to gather facts, determine timelines and make an assessment of the individuals and groups that have been impacted. The Liaison will be a member of the Peer Group that' has been assigned.

3.  **Manage Information about the Critical Incident**
    Acknowledge to employees that the critical incident has occurred. By providing factual information to your employees, you can help prevent rumors from spreading. Provide a consistent message to all groups. Address any rumors that may be circulating, or concerns employees may voice.

4.  **Support Employees**
    Remember that that traumatized employees need structure, facts, peer support, and instructions on what to expect next. Find out what employees are planning to do with their time once they leave work and provide accountability partners. Encourage them to spend time with friends or family members. Coordinate with fire and aviation staff to identify the employees most affected by the traumatic event and offer them a quiet place to be, but don't force them to be isolated if they'd prefer to stay with their co-workers.

5.  **Provide Information**
    The Agency Administrator or designee is responsible for providing the Critical Incident Support Coordinator with information about the incident. The Agency Administrator is responsible for providing a budget code for expense associated with the response (and Mental Health Professional, if applicable). The Peer Support Group Coordinator will assist in determining a location for facility for CI meetings.

    The Agency Administrator or designee will make time to receive a briefing from the Critical Incident Support Coordinator or their Point of Contact. The Agency Administrator or designee is also responsible for providing the CI Support Group with contact information for the EAP provider and/or other resources that may be available to provide support within their local area.

B.  **Local Dispatch Center**

    1.  **Request Critical Incident Peer Support**
        The local dispatch center on behalf of the Agency Administrator may be responsible for contacting the appropriate Great Basin Coordination Center to request Critical Incident Peer Support.

C.  **Great Basin Coordination Centers**

    1.  **Request Critical Incident Peer Support**
        Great Basin Coordination Centers are responsible for contacting the Critical Incident Peer Support Coordinator and requesting Critical Incident support services as possible after receiving a request.

    2.  The Great Basin Coordination Centers will assist the CISM Coordinator in facilitation of placing resource orders as needed via a roster in ROSS.

D.  **Critical Incident Peer Support Coordinator**

    1.  **Assess Need for Critical Incident Peer Support and Type of Response**
        The CI Support Coordinator will work with the Agency Administrator of designee to assess the needs of the affected individuals and determining the appropriate Critical Incident Support intervention(s) to be used.  This is often done with the assistance of professional Mental Health Care Provider.

    2.  **Activates Critical Incident Peer Support Response**
        The CI Peer Support Coordinator in consultation with the Agency Administrator (or designee) makes the decision to deploy a CI Critical Incident Peer Support Group.

3. **Develops Briefing Information for Agency Administrator and Critical Incident Peer Support Group Leader**
The CI Peer Support Coordinator will prepare a briefing package for the Agency Administrator and Peer Support Group Leader. This includes an overview of the Great Basin Critical Incident Stress Peer Support Program, information on what to expect as well as contact information.

4. **Determine the Need for Advocates or Continuation of Operations Plan (COOP) Staffing**
The CI Support Coordinator may also determine the need and provide recommendations to the local unit for   advocacy assistance and/or COOP staffing to assist that unit that's been affected.  The intent is not to overstep their involvement but to relieve managers and other staff affected who may need time off, assistance with their daily duties due their involvement with the incident, investigation teams, information demands, etc. The Agency Administrator or Peer Group Leader may also make these recommendations.

The CI Support coordinator will also notify the Great Basin Coordination Centers of the possibility of name requests for support personnel.

5. **Coordinate Ordering with the Appropriate Great Basin Coordination Center**
CISM personnel are ordered as Technical Specialists (THSP). The CI Support Coordinator with work the GACC to create a roster in ROSS for the CI Peer Support Group being mobilized as well as any name requests for additional personnel.

The Critical Incident Support Coordinator or POC is responsible for resource tracking, relaying travel information and itineraries to the GACC so that the information can be entered into ROSS.

The CI Support Coordinator will coordinate with the GACC upon demobilization and provide information so that orders can be closed out.

E. **Critical Incident Peer Support Group Leader**

1. **Acts as Alternate Critical Incident Support Coordinator**
When the CISM Coordinator is not available, a qualified CI Support Group Leader may assume the responsibilities of the Critical Incident Support Coordinator

2. **Provides Information to CI Support Coordinator or Point of Contact**
The CI Peer Support Group  Leader is responsible for communicating with the CI Support Coordinator or Point of Contact throughout the incident.

3. **Determines and Coordinates Logistics for Facilities**
The Great Basin Critical Incident Peer Support Groups are self-sufficient and will arrange for transportation, meals, lodging, etc. for the CI Peer Support Group and other support personnel. The CI Peer Support Group Leader will coordinate with the local unit to determine a facility for meetings, briefings and other critical incident support activities.

4. **Incident Business Management Protocols**
The CI Peer Support Group Leader is responsible for monitoring work/rest guidelines, driving and travel regulations, approving time and attendance and relaying travel and other information to the POC.

5. **Coordination with Agency Administrators, Designees or other Contacts**
The CI Peer Support Group Leader is responsible for checking in with the Agency Administrator or designated Point of Contact upon arrival at each location visited. The CI Peer Support Group Leader is responsible for receiving a briefing as well as  notifying the AA or Point of Contact of timeframes for meeting and briefings as well as close out and

departure information.

F.  **Point of Contact**

1.  **Assists Critical Incident Support Coordinator**
    Depending on the incident, the Critical Incident Support Coordinator may request or require assistance. A Point of Contact (POC) who does not travel with the group may be assigned to provide assistance or support with the following:

    • Prepare a written briefing package for the ordering unit(s) Agency Administrator or designee with information about the Great Basin Critical Incident Peer Support Program and what to expect.

    • Develop a phone list with Peer Support Group Leader and Group Member contact information.  Include information about key contacts and others such as local unit personnel, dispatch/GACC, fire and aviation manager's etc.

    • Gather information and other details about the incident and keep the CI Peer Support Coordinator, Group Lead and other individuals informed of new information and current situation.

    • Provide travel information for Peer Group to the GACC as needed and track Peer Group Members location and status. Often, the Peer Support Groups split into smaller groups so they can cover multiple areas or locations.

    • Provide assistance with travel such as reserving hotels, rental cars and arranging for meeting space and facilities or other logistical support needs of the Peer Support Group.

    • Coordinate with agency Human Resources staffs, Human Resources Specialists, etc. to determine what types of after care or employee assistance programs are available.

G.  **Advocates or Continuation of Operations Support Personnel**

1.  **Advocates and Other Peer Support Roles**
    Peers that can immediately respond to assist those affected by an incident either on their own or by request are a vital role in providing support when an individual or their unit becomes quickly overwhelmed. Examples of types of support and assistance that can be provided include:

2.  **Information Assistance (Phones, Email, Visitors, etc.)**
    Offices, air bases, dispatch centers and personnel at other agency locations are often inundated with phone calls, emails, and personal contacts from friends, colleagues, investigators, supporters, and others looking for information. Much of time emergency operations are still being conducted.  It is beneficial to assign a liaison or point of contact to coordinate and manage these contacts.

3.  **Continuation of Operations (Staff Replacements)**
    Dispatch Centers, Fire and Aviation Managers, Air Bases, etc. may need relief for staff members who have been affected. Operations must continue for day-to-day work and immediate action must be taken to replace staff. Often those affected are too busy to deal with it or consider staffing needs and appreciate it being done for them.

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5. M**edia and Press Involvement**
Calls and visits from the press are immediate. Assigning Public Information Officers and the establishment of information centers should be another immediate consideration.

6. **Logistics Support**
Investigation teams, PIO's, families, local/state/regional/national personnel involved at the unit require space and phones. Advocates assisting a unit are able to arrange for the conference room space (off the base/dispatch/office affected) so that operations can continue. Families may want a place nearby to meet and wait for information updates and should be away from investigation team personnel and the media.

7. **Personal Assistance**
Hospital visits and/or providing transportation to those who have been injured for follow up doctor visits, physical therapy, etc. may also be required based on an individual's situation. Peers who are able to provide this support are valuable.

H. **Family Liaisons**
Assigning Family Liaisons, hospital liaisons, etc. are the responsibility of the Agency Administrator or designee.  The Critical Incident Peer Support Group is not usually in contact with these groups or involved with their activities.  Family Liaisons and other groups such as the Honor Guard have specific roles and responsibilities and operate independently from CISM related functions.

**APPENDIX 1**

**DEFINITIONS**

**Critical Incident**
A critical incident is an extraordinary event that overwhelms the usual coping abilities of personnel. Examples of critical incidents include, but are not limited to the following:

- Line of duty death
- Suicide of a co-worker
- Entrapment
- Burn-over
- Knowing the victim of the event
- Serious lie of duty injury
- Discovery of a dead body
- Involvement in several stressful events in a short period of time
- Any event that has an unusually powerful impact on personnel

**Catastrophic Incident**
Catastrophic incidents are those situations which have an extreme impact on numerous individuals or organizations. These incidents may draw significant media attention. The level of trauma to personnel, families and a community is substantial.

**Critical Incident Peer Support Program**
The Great Basin Critical Incident Peer Support Committee recruits peers, coordinates training sessions and workshops, and seeks out new clinicians, research and technology in trauma and crisis management to enhance the program.

**Critical Incident Peer Support Group**
A group of individuals consisting of fire and aviation personnel trained in various aspects of crisis intervention. The CI Peer Support Group usually consists of three or four peer group members and a group leader but depends on the incident, numbers of individuals and organizations affected, etc. In addition to peer supporters the group includes Mental Health Care Professionals who specialize in trauma and are familiar with the wildland fire community.  The CI Peer Support Group is assembled by the Critical Incident Peer Support Group Coordinator when a request is received.

**Crisis Management Briefing (CMB)**
A structured meeting designated to provide information about the incident, control rumors, educate about symptoms of distress, inform about basic stress management, and identify resources available for continued support if desired. The goals of a CMB include providing factual information, instill a sense of leadership, reduce chaos, and enhance credibility. The CMB is designed to assist those involved directly or indirectly with the incident and is not intended for the media.

**Defusing**
A three-step crisis intervention tool designed to assist a homogenous group of people after an exposure to the same significant traumatic event. The purpose of a defusing is to mitigate the impact of the event, accelerate the recovery process, and assist the need for additional services.

**Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD)**
This is often provided as a seven-step crisis intervention tool designed to assist a homogenous group of people after an exposure to the same significant traumatic event. It may be used as part of an integrated package of interventions within the Critical Incident Peer Support response.